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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MORASCO

DICK CAVETT: I don't believe I've ever had a guest on who had anything like the story that my next guest has. On September 27, 1969, after about six weeks of rumors in the press, the army officially announced that they were holding Captain Robert Marasco along with five other Green Berets officers on charges of murder and conspiracy to murder a Vietnamese double agent. You probably remember that very well. Captain Marasco was named as the triggerman in the case and two days later the Secretary of the Army dropped the charges and -- they announced that they were dropping the charges, which the Captain denied were true, those charges.

But five days ago, Captain Marasco admitted that he had, indeed, killed the Vietnamese agent in June of that year. Will you welcome, please, Captain Bob Marasco.

(APPLAUSE)

Am I supposed to say a double agent, or in some versions it's a triple tripple agent, that the man was -- that the man

turned out to be...

CAPTAIN ROBERT MARASCO: He was a triple agent.

CAVETT: Triple agent, which means that he was serving three masters, in a sense, or that he was serving -- how do you explain a triple agent? I've never been able to get that into my head.

MARASCO: He works for three sides, but owes his allegiance to one.

CAVETT: Yeah, right. And what decided you to suddenly admit this thing after it seemed to have been closed and you had denied it, officially, before?

MARASCO: Well, for eighteen months I had to walk around with people looking at me and thinking about the term that you used before, triggerman.

CAVETT: Uh-huh.

MARASCO: It was -- it was very difficult. The army saw fit to put out any information that they deemed necessary, calling me the triggerman, what ever information they wanted to, but any defense that I could make they classified 'secret'. I was not allowed to release any of this information.

And then about two weeks ago a book came out written by Robin Moore, who wrote the original "Green Berets" and Henry Rothblatt, who was one of our attorneys, and this book called "Court Martial" came out with almost all of the highly classified information and I felt that...

CAVETT: Did you not know it was coming out?

MARASCO: I knew that a book was being written, but I knew it was a novel, I didn't know what they would make of it. I was astounded to see that the volume of classified information in there -- I felt that now that was public domain and maybe I could stand up and defend myself.

The other important factor was the Lieutenant Calley verdict. I was upset all along about the fact that Lieutenant Calley's trial was coming to be. I do not condone what I have read in the newspapers that Lieutenant Calley did, but it's called 'an atrocity'. It's an atrocity, possibly, but I think that every World War II veteran or Korean veteran can give you the same kind of stories. Atrocity? I think that war, itself, is the atrocity.

(APPLAUSE)

CAVETT: Sure, but ... you don't mean to say that every veteran that served in the army has killed unarmed women and children and old men, which were the specific charges against Lieutenant Calley?

MARASCO: No, not each individual soldier, but many, many My Lai's to a greater or lesser degree have happened in Vietnam and in all the other wars.

BRIAN BEDFORD: May I ask something?

CAVETT: Yeah.

BEDFORD: Why were you apprehensive about the Calley trial coming up? Why did you regret that happening?

MARASCO: I didn't think that it would do the United States any good, I didn't think that it would do anything for the people

of the United States, and I think that that has made itself evident where 75,000 I believe is the figure, letters were sent to Washington, to the President. There's a great deal of annoyance, yet. Both the political right and the political left, both seem to generally feel the same way about the Calley situation, but for different reasons.

BEDFORD: You say that war is the atrocity, isn't it possible that by these trials coming up that they would bring home to people more the awfulness and the atrocities of war?

I mean because a lot of us -- I mean here the war's so many thousands of miles away, and when this thing does actually come up and is in the papers every day and everybody's subjected to being really involved with it, don't you think that would get the people more involved somehow? Do you Dick?

CAVETT: Yeah, but I wonder about another thing before that, though, which is, do you object to the Calley trial on the grounds that he's the only one to be convicted, then it's unjust?

MARASCO: Yes. Most definitely.

CAVETT: Nobody knows if there aren't going to be other convictions going higher and higher and higher, and so a lot of the people are protesting saying if he's the only one, then he shouldn't be the one picked on, but if they're going to go higher, then...

MARASCO: Well, how high are they going to go? They've...

CAVETT: I don't know. My point is that neither of us knows, do we?

MARASCO: Well, they have released and dropped the charges on the two generals that were involved. I look at it in the way that if this is wrong, and if we must convict the lowest ranking officer possible for such an atrocity, then should we not get President Truman for killing the women and children in Nagasaka and Hiroshima? They weren't all Japanese soldiers.

CAVETT: Yeah. I don't know the answer to that, but if the case has to be viewed in its own -- well, I don't know. This is a side issue, really, and your own story is so fascinating, maybe we should get on with that.

BEDFORD: ...a question of strategy? I mean, I know that this is indefensible, killing anybody or anything, but Truman's move was a question of military strategy, wasn't it, rather than somebody taking the law into their own hands?

MARASCO: I'm sure he felt it was strategy, and -- but I would imagine on a much lower level. So did Lieutenant Calley.

BEDFORD: But was he in a position to make strategical decisions himself?

MARASCO: He had a platoon that he was responsible for.

CAVETT: Maybe we can come back to background to this. We have to take a station break, we'll be right back.

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CAVETT: Talking with Captain Marasco, former Green Beret. Former Green Beret?

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: Yeah. You -- we were talking about the Calley thing. We're going to have to put that aside to get to your story, because our time's so limited, but the idea that Calley has been considered a hero by a certain number of people seems to be what the man was talking about who wrote the letter to President Nixon that some of them think that he killed 150 Communists and that -- in other words they didn't see the specific evidence that the court had to deal with and with that evidence there's nothing they could do but find him guilty within the limited confines of the actual case. Do you find the hero idea a bit distorted?

MARASCO: I think it's revolting. I think that the country is looking for an Audie Murphy from World War II. They're looking for a hero to come out of Vietnam that will, maybe, make Vietnam OK. I don't think we're going to get a hero out of Vietnam. I came home to a few accolades that I thought were dreadful. I didn't deserve it any more than any other GI that went there and I think that Lieutenant Calley, who overreacted, I don't think that I would have called him a good officer; I don't think that he could ever have been a Green Beret, for example. No, I don't think at all that Lieutenant Calley should be considered a hero.

But I would like to say one other thing. Now that the Calley trial is over I think that there is still a trial, and I think it's the United States that's on trial now.

CAVETT: What court do you try the United States in?

MARASCO: Unfortunately, we don't have one.

CAVETT: Uh-huh. Yeah. All right. I wanted to get your reaction to that. Now, about your decision to speak, that you were talking about earlier, to come out with the admission of the killing of the Vietnamese agent. Why does it have to be so much "confidential" stamped all over this case? Or can you answer that? MARASCO: The government, the army especially, uses that "secret" stamp sometimes a little bit too indiscriminately. I think they use it sometimes to put the dirty wash and hide the dirty wash. If the entire story were able to come out, I think that many of our generals and our higher brass, especially in Vietnam, would come out looking quite foolish, so it's much easier just to stamp it secret and not let it come out.

CAVETT: I'm curious to know what sorts of things are in there. Would there be connection, by any chance, with other things that the CIA has been suspected of? You're smiling at me. The possible assassination of Diem in the past or Che Guevara. These things are always question marks.

MARASCO: Okay, one -- I'll give you one little piece of interesting information. In our Article 32 Hearing, which is the military equivalent of a grand jury, we requested certain information for our defense. One of the things that we requested was information on the Special Forces or Green Beret situation in Panama, because one of the men that was charged...

CAVETT: This group that included you and...

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: De Real and Foster?

MARASCO: Right. Had been with the Green Beret in Panama.

and had been detailed down to Bolivia. And was training the Bolivian rangers, the Bolivian rangers that killed Che. I don't think that the CIA or any one else in the government wanted that kind of information to come out, because they said that they dropped the case for reasons of national security. Yes, that was true, they dropped it also because the CIA refused to testify.

But they dropped it also because they didn't have the evidence to prove the case. They had given -- they don't offer, they give -- immunity to one of my comrades, and he said, "No, I will not accept immunity and will not testify against my friends," which mean that if he didn't testify, we would go free, and he would get five years.

Now, to me that's a hero.

CAVETT: I'm astonished that you have just sat here and said you know that the CIA engineered the killing of Che Guevara. That's news, isn't it? I mean, is this -- do people know this?

MARASCO: The Green Beret were and are still, but to a lesser degree, the action arm of the CIA. When they make a decision on national policy in another country, another country's national policy, they don't have the people to go out and train the Bolivian rangers, so who can better do that than U.S. Special Forces.

CAVETT: Such as you would have been training if you had been re-assigned, those who were sent out to get Guevara.

MARASCO: Yes, yeah. And you mentioned Diem. I don't know this for a fact, but I'm sure I believe just like everyone

here and everyone looking in that of course the CIA or some agency had something to do with the overthrow of Diem. What about Sianuk?

CAVETT: I don't know. You would know better than I.

MARASCO: My main job in Vietnam was running intelligence operations directed against Cambodia into the Parrot's Beak and further. I knew the Cambodians well; I helped to train them, many of them worked for me. I just can't see the Cambodians really overthrowing Prince Sianuk. Not because they liked him or disliked him, but only because they're not the kind of people that would.

CAVETT: What are the limits on what you can talk about now? There don't seem to be very many. (LAUGHTER)

MARASCO: Do you mean legally or as far as I'm concerned? Legally, I have just said enough that if they really wanted to, they could send me back to jail. But I feel that it's about time that there is some truth; that people can decide if they want wars, not Vietnam, necessarily, because they've pretty much indicated whether they want that one or not, but if they want wars, they must be willing to accept what war is, and what war does and what happens in it. (APPLAUSE)

CAVETT: When we come back, we'll get to what happened to you.

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CAVETT: Talking with Captain -- do I still call you "Captain" Marasco or do you call yourself "Captain" Marasco?

MARASCO: I generally call myself Bob.

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CAVETT: All right. Um, did the CIA order you to kill the agent?

MARASCO: Orders in Vietnam, especially orders from the CIA are never written. You don't get a nice formal piece of paper that says Central Intelligence Agency on the top or Department of the Army, no. Orders in Vietnam, not just from the CIA, but from the military, are very oblique, yet very, very clear. You know what you're to do. The quote was, from the CIA, "We cannot officially sanction it, but your best course of action is elimination."

CAVETT: How did you get this quote?

MARASCO: From the -- the CIA gave it to my superiors.

CAVETT: Mmmmm.

MARASCO: At CIA headquarters in Vietnam -- or in Saigon, excuse me. The man that gave that -- made that statement was in military uniform. He was known to be a CIA operative in uniform, that's kind of opposite of what we usually hear, that military men are detailed to the agency.

CAVETT: So the orders came, although they don't exist in writing anywhere, they were handed down to you verbally.

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: And you knew that -- there was no ambiguity, no two ways of interpreting that.

MARASCO: When the agency says, "Your best course of action is..." that means go and do it and stop bothering us with this little trivia.

CAVETT: Now, how do you decide -- I was going to say, how do you decide how to do it then?

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MARASCO: Well, we are the operational arm. That statement meant to us, "Take care of it." We had requested that they take what's called O.I., "operational interest" in this guy, because we were an intelligence-gathering unit; we were not assassins, as they said as I came out. We asked them to take operational interest, take him off our hands and our primary suggestion was to put him on ice out of the country for a year or two until his information was of no value.

They said they did not have that capability, which we knew to be false, that then tells us to just go and take care of it and don't bother us with it.

BEDFORD: Did you have trouble with your conscience at that time when you knew -- or did you not question what had to be done?

MARASCO: I expected that order from the CIA. I think that it was the only choice that they had. I knew probably after we had Chuyen for three or four days under intensive interrogation, lie detector exams, sodium pentothal exams, I knew that if the agency did not take him off our hands, that that would be the only course of action.

CAVETT: How did you feel about him as a human being? Did you ever think of saying to the guy, "Listen, they're going to get you. Get away and stay out of this business..." or does that ever cross your mind?

MARASCO: Oh, most definitely. I am a human being, and to take another life, whether it's in a shoot-out in a military situation or like this, it's not an easy thing to do. But I

don't think I really ever seriously considered letting him go and telling him to keep his nose clean. He was just too dangerous for that?

BEDFORD: Why didn't you refuse to kill him?

MARASCO: Why didn't I?

BEDFORD: Yes.

MARASCO: Well, it was a little different than that. When we went out on the boat as has been written in most of the newspapers, there were three of us on that boat.

CAVETT: This is at night?

MARASCO: Yes, sir. And no one knew, and no one had decided at that point who was going to pull the trigger. He had been my agent, he worked for me, I felt that it was my duty -- my responsibility rather than the other two men, and when the time came for the decision, I just said, "I'll take that silenced .22 pistol," and it was my job to do.

CAVETT: What went through your mind at the moment? Not now, I mean when you were doing it? Anything or is there a sense of...

MARASCO: No, not...

CAVETT: Extreme tension or any kind of fear, any kind of moral pangs or...

MARASCO: Not at the moment, because at the moment you're quite busy. We're out in the South China Sea in a little rowboat. We knew that it was 240 feet deep, and I wasn't too excited about falling over myself.

No, I had about six hours before we went out, when I had

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received the order, and I had about six hours to think about it, and yes, a lot of things go through your mind, because this was the first and only time that I had been involved in something like this.

I had been in fire fights, and I knew that I was responsible for -- for killing Viet Cong and North Vietnamese before this, but never quite like this.

CAVETT: Having to kill a man who's unconscious at the time is what you mean?

MARASCO: Yes, we had shot him with quite a great deal of morphine. If there's such a thing as humane killing, which I doubt, but if there is such a thing, then that was it, because he was shot with a great deal of morphine, he was unconscious, he didn't know what happened.

CAVETT: How do you on the one hand doubt that there's such a thing as humane killing and on the other hand account for the fact that you went into this profession and got into that position where you knew that you might, going into it?

MARASCO: Well, I don't think that -- I think that "humane" and "killing" just don't go together. I don't see how you can possibly kill anything humanely.

CAVETT: I see. So, you can get into a job where you may have to kill people.

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: Without thinking that it's humane. Just you recognize it for what it is.

MARASCO: Yes. Or else you don't go into it. Because as a Green Beret, you're highly trained, you're a double volunteer; first you must volunteer to be a paratrooper and then to go through Green Beret training, and you know you're going to Vietnam. That takes a certain...

CAVETT: And they weighted the body with tire rims and dropped it overboard.

MARASCO: Tire rims, chain, and in a mail sack.

CAVETT: Why were the expert searchers not able to find it? They still to this day have not found it?

MARASCO: No, and they won't. Many people have asked me, why, if you put him in a mail bag and all of that weight and 240 feet deep, would you have to shoot him? Well, we were in shark-infested water. The sharks would not have bothered him unless there was blood. Plus I'm quite, quite sure that had the people, the divers, found him -- based on the feeling of the military at the time of our trial, if they had found him down there, which was impossible, but if they had, they wouldn't have brought him up.

CAVETT: Why?

MARASCO: Because they thought that what was being done to us was wrong.

CAVETT: I see. They sympathized with you and...

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: Yeah.

BEDFORD: What I still don't understand is how you could do it. (APPLAUSE)

MARASCO: It basically comes down to I'm an American, I'm proud to be an American, and my country asked me to go to Vietnam -- my country asked me to do -- to do this, and I had to just decide whether they had the right to give me those orders or not.

Some people moan and groan out in the audience, some people don't think that they do have the right.

BEDFORD: But didn't they...

MARASCO: I think that...

BEDFORD: The message said that we don't have the right to do this.

MARASCO: Well, that means that we could then let him go.

CAVETT: Yeah.

MARASCO: If we let him go, he wasn't too happy about having been interrogated for a week. I don't think he would have just gone on his merry way and kept quiet. We were what is known as a unilateral operation in Vietnam, that means we did not have any Vietnamese counterparts. The Vietnamese did not know we existed. If he started talking it around, then the Vietnamese our illustrious allies would have -- would have thought, "Why can't the Americans trust us?" And then maybe we unfortunately would have had to tell them.

CAVETT: Hmmm.

MARASCO: There was also a situation with Cambodia at the time.

CAVETT: So many questions in my head, and we have a message, and we'll be right back.

CAVETT: Talking with Captain Marasco. I used the word "assassin" earlier. I didn't know what other word to use. That was used in the papers, "admitted assassin" and all that. What would you have preferred?

MARASCO: I don't really know what you would call it.

CAVETT: Yeah.

MARASCO: There are...

CAVETT: It's -- I don't know English...

MARASCO: None of them seem to really fit the situation.

CAVETT: I guess one of the questions in my mind, I heard you talking to Brian about it, and you said, during the break, was, how have you changed because of this experience. Would you do it again?

MARASCO: I think it would be very difficult to answer that, because it would be very difficult to get the exact...

CAVETT: I would think: what if I get into one of those situations like that, where I might have to make a terribly hard decision involving life or death? I guess this goes back to what did you want to be as a kid.

MARASCO: Well, I guess that I considered it. I think that any soldier considers that if he's going into a war zone, how he's going to feel if he's confronted with a life or death situation. I was a Green Beret, a paratrooper, yes, I considered that.

CAVETT: You mean that you would get the hardest kind of decision because it sounds gruesome to say this, but it's obviously easier to kill people from the air with a bomb than it

is to shoot them with a rifle, but it's still harder to take a man out into a boat that you've worked with and kill him. So, you get the hardest kind of decision that you could possibly have to make.

MARASCO: Yes, when you're sitting up pushing a button at 50,000 feet, you don't have to worry about your conscience or supposedly don't have to worry about your conscience. I don't see it as any different. I don't see 50,000 feet, five feet or five inches any different. The people are still dead.

CAVETT: Except for that sense in which it's easier on -- that ludicrous use of the word "easy", it's easier to push the button.

MARASCO: Possibly. I can't imagine that my conscience would feel any better, though, if I did it at 50,000 feet.

CAVETT: Sure. Sure.

MARASCO: For some people, maybe.

CAVETT: This is so interesting to me. We must take another break, and then we'll come back. Stay where you are. (APPLAUSE)

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CAVETT: We -- let me ask you this, Captain Marasco. When a guy goes into the Army, we've learned from the Calley thing and all, there are limits on what he is supposed to -- can be forced or asked to do. There are circumstances in which he can disobey an order. A guy who goes into the Army, not a guy who goes into a special unit like the Green Berets. What's the difference there? Can you think of a kind of order that you would not obey that could have happened to you in the Green

MARASCO: I -- yes, I am sure there are many. Because you volunteer in almost every situation, yet one must realize that Green Berets are asked to do things that a regular soldier is not. We have been running long-range reconnaissance missions across the border from Viet Nam for a long time, as long as there have been Americans in Vietnam. It was never done by a regular infantry officer or sergeant. They're always done by Green Beret.

CAVETT: But my question was, can you think of a kind of order that would involve killing that you would not obey, or once you are in the Green Berets, have you said, "I will do anything they tell me, because they have to operate in an unorthodox way that perhaps isn't governed by the Army Manual, if no one finds out about it? Is it at least a good question?

MARASCO: Yes, it's a very good question. Yeah, there are orders that I probably wouldn't follow, but before I went into the Green Beret, I had to know that there were going to be orders very different from regular military. If I had been asked in this case to kill Chuyen and I did not agree, I would not have to.

CAVETT: If you didn't agree that he should be killed?

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: You wouldn't have to. They would find someone else.

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: Yeah.

MARASCO: But he still would have been dead.

MARASCO: He was one of my agents.

CAVETT: You controlled him?

MARASCO: Yes. He had been -- he had given me fairly good service. So I -- but I tried not to get emotionally involved with any of my agents. That's a very difficult thing to do.

CAVETT: So does an actor.

BEDFORD: I must say I've often wanted to kill my agent.

(LAUGHTER)

CAVETT: It's strange, though, that there can be humor in a conversation like this...

BEDFORD: But what else are you to do?

CAVETT: You rather need relief, though.

MARASCO: I just think now that after 18 months now I'm older, it's a little bit easier to find humor.

CAVETT: Has it been easy to find work, to adjust to civilian life, to have a job? What do you do?

MARASCO: I was afraid that you would ask that. That usually creates quite a bit of laughter. My job, my civilian job, is that of a life insurance broker. (LAUGHTER)

CAVETT: It is? And what special qualifications do you have... (LAUGHTER)...for that?

MARASCO: And I am, as a life insurance broker, a member of the Million Dollar Sales Club, so I've sold a lot of it.

CAVETT: Gee. Are you religious? Is there any sense in which you are conspicuously religious or non-religious?

MARASCO: No, not religion religious, individual religions. No. But I do believe.

CAVETT: I guess I should -- I'm tempted to follow up on that because I wondered how you handled the conflict of religious sanctions against killing and that's the question that every soldier has to face.

MARASCO: Yes, and I know that when I came back from Vietnam and was released from the jail cell, I came back and three weeks later was involved in a very strange automobile accident that put me in the hospital for three months and in a coma for a week, and between the...

CAVETT: Are you going to say what I think you are? I'm sorry. Are you suspicious of how the automobile accident came about?

MARASCO: Am I suspicious? I don't put anything past anybody any more. I don't doubt anything. I know you're wondering whether the CIA fixed up that accident.

CAVETT: Mm-hmm, exactly.

MARASCO: I doubt it, but, no, I guess I really don't doubt it. (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE)

CAVETT: Are you allowed to buy one of your own policies, I suppose? I'm sorry, I feel so strange about getting any kind of laughter in this interview.

MARASCO: One of my life insurance companies hesitated for quite a while before they sold me a \$100,000 policy that I bought a while back.

CAVETT: All right, let's make it clear one more time to the people who may have tuned in late on this, why -- why you're here, why you're talking, why do you appear and -- do you know what I'm saying?

MARASCO: Yes.

CAVETT: I wish I did.

MARASCO: I think so. I am here because I think that the American public has the right to know the truth. I think we've had enough half-truths. I think that if the truth is known, they will better be able to decide how they feel about Lieutenant Calley's situation, how they feel about Colonel Henderson's up-coming trial, how they feel about the war. I think that before people can make an accurate decision, they have to know all the facts, and I hope that I'm bringing some of them out.

I want to make it very clear, a lot of people in typical American fashion have said, "There has to be an angle, why he waited 18 months and let it out." The first thought is that it's money. If that were the case, I would not have given my story to The New York Times. I would have sold it for a great deal of money to Life Magazine or one of the other magazines. I'm not in this -- making this statement for money. I have nothing to do with this book that is out.

CAVETT: Profits from the book or...

MARASCO: No, I have no financial reasons for this. It is based on my principles. I believe that the American people cannot be free, a really free people unless they know what happens. Unless they know the truth. (APPLAUSE)

CAVETT: And what would you like them to decide from this, that if a man should be put into such a situation, if there is such nasty dealing going on, if there's so much deception

necessary, then -- what? Then you want a national referendum against war?

MARASCO: No. Then, if they object to that, and if they find that very hard to accept, then let's not have any more wars.

CAVETT: So -- I see. The man's wife asked for reparation from the government. And got a small pittance, it seemed like at the time. How do you feel about that?

MARASCO: To a Vietnamese, the equivalent of six thousand American dollars is by no means a pittance. Six thousand dollars in Vietnam is a great, great deal of money.

CAVETT: Uhhuh. I didn't realize it was that much, I guess.

MARASCO: It was very strange that -- excuse me -- she yelled like hell until she got the six thousand dollars, and then you never heard from her again.

CAVETT: Did she know he was a spy?

MARASCO: I don't believe so.

CAVETT: Did he know he was going to be killed that night?

MARASCO: I'm quite sure he did. I'm quite sure that he realized, after three or four days of interrogation, that he would probably be killed. But that's hard for an American to understand because we would climb the walls and scream and yell.

The Vietnamese are very different.

CAVETT: Are you saying Orientals are different?

MARASCO: Yes, from my experience, death does not mean the same thing to them that it does to us, and life doesn't mean the same thing.

CAVETT: Is there any reason why death should mean less to the Viet Cong than it does to the South Vietnamese troops who were shot, at the way the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese troops were willing to die and go over their own men in that last invasion, they came out stunned and shaking and said, "We never saw anything like it. They just didn't care how many of them got killed." And we cared and some of us ran. You know, you saw those interviews.

MARASCO: Well, the -- I think that says quite a lot for the North Vietnamese propaganda machine, it's fantastic. Ours isn't that good.

CAVETT: Hmmm. We have a message. We'll be right back.

(APPLAUSE)

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CAVETT: We're right back. We don't have very much time left, and there are still so many questions in my head. It's so odd to think how people turned out. We're maybe approximately the same age. I would guess we're approximately the same age. And Brian became an actor, and you went into the Green Berets, and I went into whatever this is. (LAUGHTER) I wonder, what were you like as a kid? Did you like to go to the same movies? Did you like adventure movies conspicuously? Is there any way you can look into your past and tell which man is going to turn out a Green Beret and which is not?

MARASCO: No, I don't think so. I wasn't any more excited about John Wayne movies than any other kid was.

CAVETT: I loved John Wayne movies.

MARASCO: Yeah, I went to them, I enjoyed them, but not two and three times. I don't think I was any different. You must remember that I didn't go into the army until I was 24 years old. I didn't -- although I did enlist, I was about to be drafted. I had never really considered having to go into the army. I went in, and I felt that as long as I was in, I might as well be the best soldier I could be, the same way as before I went in, I wanted to be the best life insurance man I could be. The best soldier is a Green Beret.

CAVETT: Are you proud of the Green Berets?

MARASCO: Yes, I am. Your conductor played "Ballad of the Green Berets" for me before, and I appreciate that. Yes, I think they are the finest fighting men in the world.

CAVETT: Are they as good as they were in the John Wayne movie, "The Green Berets"? (LAUGHTER)

MARASCO: That movie didn't really do anything for the Green Beret. No, they are much better than that, and they're not quite as conical.

BEDFORD: What I think is even more fascinating, Dick, is you went into acting and then you did this, and I went into acting, you went into the Green Berets and everything. What I think is extraordinary is that you and I, presumably -- I know that I could not under any circumstances, I don't think, end another human being's life voluntarily. Do you think you could?

CAVETT: I honestly don't know. I can't -- I don't think --
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I think it's silly to say I can imagine what I'd do in a situation

like that because I have never been faced with anything like it.

MARASCO: A few years ago I couldn't answer that question.

CAVETT: It's interesting. You know, one thing about that is that the world is different. If I had gone into World War II, when there was that great aura of righteousness about it, much more than there is about this. These poor kids in Vietnam are saying, "We don't know what we're fighting for," many of them. A lot of them say they do, but you will admit that a great number of them say, "This is pretty confusing, to know what we're dying for here."

MARASCO: Yeah, because they don't get the amount of propaganda before they go the way you did in World War II. And you say that you don't think you could do that, and you're both actors. I don't think that that really has anything to do with it because apparently I was able to do that, and I would find it very possible to be an actor.

BEDFORD: ...so fascinating, the difference between you and, say, me.

CAVETT: Are you sure you know what the difference is?

BEDFORD: I don't know. I don't know. But I can understand kids in war (CROSSTALK)...at the spur of the moment, but if you have six hours to contemplate, that part of it I find very mystifying.

CAVETT: It would be easy to feel superior to you in some way, or it's tempting to, I suppose.

BEDFORD: No, I don't mean that.

CAVETT: No, I don't mean you meant that either, but I'm sure a lot of people have that reaction -- "At least I wouldn't ever do what he did, by God."

MARASCO: Well, that's, I think, primarily because you've never been confronted with that situation.

CAVETT: Sure. (APPLAUSE) And I don't think I can honestly say what I would do in that situation. Maybe even in yours, because there's still more about it that I don't know, even though you've told us a bit more about it than I had expected to know.

MARASCO: And you say that you are an actor and couldn't do that. I apparently was able to do that, but I think I would also be capable of being an actor. Probably not as good as you.

BEDFORD: I hope not. (LAUGHTER) We might have competition.

CAVETT: You must see him in his play, by the way. I haven't seen it, but (LAUGHTER) I hear it's just wonderful. We'll be right back after this message.

* * *

CAVETT: We have only a few minutes left, and it's rare to get into a thing on this show where I'm so interested that I go right on through the other guest, which is unfortunate.

BEDFORD: I was hoping you'd start talking about the play.

CAVETT: Talk about your play?

BEDFORD: Yes, that we'd just go on and on and on. (LAUGHTER)

CAVETT: We'll do that another time. And I'm sorry. I apologize for Mr. Carpenter and Patsy Kelly, who will be here on an upcoming show. Do you get odd phone calls? I asked you that during the break, so I'll pretend I'm asking it to you the first time now.

MARASCO: I get a few. I get a few calls from people who are in the John Birch Society and ask me if I'd like to join, which is absurd. (LAUGHTER) I get...

CAVETT: Why is that absurd?

MARASCO: Well, because I'm just not a John Birch type.

CAVETT: Yeah. How are you about the veterans -- what about the veterans who are going to march in Washington against the war?

What sympathy do you have with them?

MARASCO: None.

CAVETT: So you're between a John Birch type and those people.

MARASCO: Yes. Everybody asks which side. I'd like to consider myself a political moderate.

CAVETT: Yeah. Well, what do you say to a guy who is a veteran -- the Veterans Against Vietnam War is an organization -- the Veterans of the Vietnam War against the Vietnam War. What can't you agree on? What do you ask them?

MARASCO: I feel that if they really believe that from their experiences in Vietnam, then they must certainly have the right to march against the war. It's my decision that I don't agree with them, and I feel that I have the right to voice my opinion.

CAVETT: So then you had a clearer sense of why it was right to be there than the poor guys who are tortured while they're there, tortured mentally about, "No one's ever made it clear to us why we should lay down our lives in this war.."

MARASCO: Maybe I was better able to rationalize, and maybe the fact that I did stay there 21 months instead of the normal twelve months, had a little more experience, I worked -- as a Green Beret, you work with the Vietnamese. Maybe I worked closer with the people.

CAVETT: And that changed - that influenced you, something you saw working closer with the people?

MARASCO: Oh, most certainly.

BEDFORD: If you're so against war, why are you against people demonstrating against it?

MARASCO: Oh, I did not say that I was against war. I said that if the American public cannot accept what we are calling the atrocities, then we shouldn't have war.

BEDFORD: You mean you're pro war, are you?

MARASCO: No, war is a terrible thing. They might call me back to fight another one, and I got lucky the last time and didn't get killed. I really don't want to get killed.

BEDFORD: Well, you have to be either against it or for it, don't you?

MARASCO: For this war?

BEDFORD: Yeah.

MARASCO: No, I don't think you do.

CAVETT: That's a puzzling statement.

MARASCO: I think that we did it wrong. I believe that we should have been there in the first place with the advisers and the Green Berets volunteering to go. I disagree with the fact that we sent hundreds of thousands of men in 1965 and put them in a defensive position in a no-win war. I've never heard of a no-win war. (APPLAUSE) They have been there six years. They haven't won. I cannot believe that half a million Americans cannot win a war in six years.

CAVETT: So maybe the guy who marches against this war is marching against it for that reason, that it's...

MARASCO: Then I would agree.

CAVETT: ...absurd to continue if we're obviously not going to win and we're never going to say we lost and...

MARASCO: Then I would agree with him.

CAVETT: I see.

BEDFORD: Yes, but you...

CAVETT: I'm sorry. We have a message, Brian. We'll be right back. (APPLAUSE)

* * *

(CAVETT GIVES CLOSING CREDITS)

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Barry Farber STATION WOR
DATE April 5, 1971 7:15 PM CITY New York

FULL TEXT

BARRY FARBER: I'm Barry Farber. If you keep your radio fixed right where it is, you will meet the former Green Beret who raised his hand and said, "I am the one who shot that double agent."

* * *

This is a very difficult broadcast to organize. It came up in a hurry. Across from me right now are Robin Moore, author of "The Green Berets" and co-author with Henry Rothblatt, who is also here, of a novel called "Court Martial." The novel is about the case which exploded after "The Green Berets" was written, about the double, triple, quadruple agent who was eliminated, adding a new word to the English language. We've had "do in," we've had "bump off." A new synonym phrase, to "eliminate with extreme prejudice" was added to our lexicography of violence. Henry Rothblatt was the attorney who went over there to try the case that never got tried.

Now, we're joined by Robert F. Morasco, one of those accused Green Berets, who now at this point in American history says, "I am the one who shot that man on orders from the CIA." Mr. Morasco, am I misquoting you? Did you actually shoot this agent personally with a revolver?

MORASCO: Yes, I did shoot him. It was not with a revolver, it was a 22-caliber automatic pistol with silencer.

FARBER: In other words, Henry Rothblatt, that puts you in the position of having gone to Vietnam to defend Robert Morasco and others against charges that he did exactly what he now says he did.

ROTHBLATT: Well, there was no question, real serious question, that this agent was killed. There was no real serious -- although I did raise that as a technical legal question. But the facts weren't very much in dispute. It was the moral and legal issues arising from the acts that were in dispute.

FARBER: Mr. Morasco, why did you pick right now to --incidentally, I read the front-page New York Times article. It didn't say how this came about. It didn't say Robert Morasco called a press conference and said enough of this. It didn't say Robert Morasco in a press release to all the media, said, against the background of Lieutenant Calley's conviction, I just somehow felt impelled into making this revelation. How did this happen to come about right now. Why do you pick right now to tell a recoiling world that you shot the agent on orders from the CIA?

MORASCO: There are a couple of reasons. I had been thinking about this for the last 18 months, since I came back from Vietnam. I got a little more publicity than most of the other men because they said that I was the one that actually did the shooting. I have to live with this the rest of my life. The Army saw fit to classify the answer to your question, classify it secret. I never did understand that. But I felt that if the Army felt that if the Army felt that that was necessary, that I would adhere to their decision. But it was very difficult over the past 18 months to think about that and not -- and know that the people here in the United States did not know what the truth was, what was really happening.

Then Lieutenant Calley's case came out, and the revulsion of public opinion to the Lieutenant Calley verdict really started to push me. Then I saw one night on the nightly news some young boys from New Mexico who were trying to be arrested for doing the same kind of thing to a lesser or greater degree than Lieutenant Calley did and Lieutenant Calley was convicted for. They couldn't be arrested.

I still had to consider the classified information situation with the Army. But at the same time, out came a book by Robin Moore and one of our attorneys, Henry Rothblatt, called "Court Martial." And in reading through this book, I saw so much of the classified information that I was reluctant to release. I felt that it then made that classified information public domain.

But most important, I am so concerned with the direction that our country is headed. Mine may be the first case, the Green Beret court-martial, then comes Lieutenant Calley, then Captain Medina, Colonel Henderson. Who is next? I would be

asking myself that question if I were a young private in the Army now.

FARBER: I'm Barry Farber. If you keep your radio fixed right where it is, we'll proceed as long as time permits. Robert Morasco, the former Green Beret, who was in an automobile accident -- incidentally, was that an automobile accident. We were all asking each other around this table on the first of the ten days you were on the critical list over in New Jersey.

MORASCO: It was an automobile mishap. Whether it was an accident or not, I guess I thought about for a long time. I have received a lot of letters suggesting that maybe it wasn't really an accident.

FARBER: Were the circumstances such that other hands could have been on the story? Or was it you losing control of a perfectly good vehicle around a bend?

MORASCO: No, I was driving at 45 miles an hour in a 50-mile zone, going north on a highway, and somebody doing 120 miles an hour going south on this divided highway, who was also drunk, jumped the divider, flew up in the air and landed on top of me, airborne, and put me in the hospital for three months and in a coma for four days.

FARBER: Robin Moore, author of "The Green Berets," whose book prompted Robert F. Morasco to tell what he told the New York Times, the headline, "Ex-Beret Says He Killed Agent On Orders of CIA." With Robin Moore, Henry Rothblatt, co-author of the book that started all this revealing "Court Martial" -- "Court Martial," a book that was born with a headline and has caused many, many more headlines since its birth. "Court Martial" is published by Doubleday.

In a minute, Mr. Morasco, I want to take you back to the shooting and then to the direction of the country.

* * *

Robert Morasco, you've told friends that the one word you don't like is "trigger man." You admit you shot this agent, but you don't like the word "trigger man." How would you explain to your grandchildren your role in this?

MORASCO: I would tell them that I served my country, I followed orders that I felt to be legal orders. One of those orders which tended to hit national prominence was killing a double agent. The word, "trigger man," a euphemism that some newspaperman, I am sure, picked up, it just seems that every time this case is referred to regarding me, I am regarded as the trigger man. And I just dislike the term.

FARBER: You say that CIA ordered the execution of this double agent. You just happen to be the man who performed the execution. Did the CIA officially order you to or was the order implied, was it written?

MORASCO: The CIA never officially does anything. They don't hand you a written piece of paper or a printed piece of paper and the top it says Central Intelligence Agency.

The orders, not only from the CIA but from the military in Vietnam are oblique but yet very, very clear, very implied yet very clear. The CIA, I want to make clear, made this order known to my superiors and then it came down the chain of command.

FARBER: And you thought it was a legal order. Were you in a kind of work -- and this is obviously not taking aim on a battlefield, this was not defending a fire post; you knew that you were going to be with a man. And, I don't know, some compulsion of taste prevents me from asking you to recite the actual details. He thought he was going off on a mission. He didn't realize he was going off to be executed. Everybody would have sort of a haunting curiosity to know exactly what that scene played like in real life. Let's forget that for right now. You didn't feel guilty performing an illegal order, and the reason, according to what you told the New York Times, I think is the center, the nerve center, of the story. You said so much of this went on. This just happens to be the case in the headlines, like Calley happens to be the guy in the dock. Apparently there were a lot of these executions performed by Green Berets at CIA orders all over the place. I think you referred to execution teams or squads.

MORASCO: Executions are not commonplace, but they also are not uncommon. There are units in Vietnam that are generally made up of Vietnamese who are trained, directed, financed and equipped by the Americans, and generally by the CIA. We usually turn the dirty work over to them so that we can keep our lily-white hands clean. We want to be benevolent warriors. I don't see how that's really possible, but that seems to be the direction that we're trying to take. Eliminations, assassinations, whatever they're called today, are not at all uncommon. And you must also realize that -- you were mentioning before didn't you find this kind of unusual because it wasn't the standard battlefield type of action. Well, I was not the standard battlefield type of officer. My cover was that of an infantry officer on an A team in the Mekong Delta. But I was an intelligence officer. My mission was the collection of cross-border intelligence.

FARBER: Henry Rothblatt.

ROTHBLATT: May I give your listeners a little bit of the flavor of what took place as Robin and I have written it in "Court Martial," answer your question by the dialogue we have. Hank McKuen, the defense attorney, in this case is addressing the court on the question of proof and trying to uncover or have certain evidence of the CIA uncovered in court. And Hank McKuen says this: "This is the only explanation for General Flint's orders." Pardon, we know who General Flint is.

FARBER: And we also know who McKuen is, namely Henry Rothblatt. Okay.

ROTHBLATT: "To court-martial him for an alleged crime, which, Mr. Morasco, are you glad or sorry that Moore and Rothblatt wrote the book.

MOORE: Do you want me to start?

FARBER: Robin Moore.

MOORE: Well, I'm certainly not sorry that Bob Morasco decided to speak up, because he, I think more than any other single individual in the United States, was able to polarize the feeling. Lots of people have spoken up but nobody had -- many people may have done other things, more interesting things, even, than Bob Morasco, but his speaking up, more than any other single event, I think, since the verdict, the Calley verdict has come in, short of the President saying he was going to review it, has made people understand that it is not fair, right, American, just, or anything else, to take a guy like Lieutenant Calley and make him the scapegoat for the entire thing.

I'm known as a hawk and a rightwinger. I don't know whether I really am or not. But this whole situation is the first time I've ever found myself in agreement with people like Senator McGovern and a lot of other people. So I think it was right for him to speak up.

Now, that is my feeling about it. But I think that Captain Morasco may feel a little differently about the book I wrote. I was unable to talk to the Green Beret while I was writing that book. I only had access to Mr. Rothblatt, information that I could get, but I could not talk to the Special Forces men who were involved. Bob, who I might have been able to talk to, was in the hospital during that period of time that I was working on the book. And even if he hadn't been, I don't think he would have been in a mood to talk to me. I tried to solicit their cooperation. I sent to Colonel Rowe, or I had sent to him in a devious way, an early manuscript of the book, figuring that if there's something in it he didn't like it he could use

the same channels -- this is an old Special Forces custom; you don't have to know each other, but you can form a channel -- to send back to me and say don't do it.

So I don't feel that I did anything wrong in fictionalizing with the help of Henry -- with the help of him! I couldn't have done it without Henry, because Henry was the source. I don't think I did anything wrong in writing that book. However, I think Bob has a different feeling, and he's certainly entitled to it.

FARBER: Henry Rothblatt, before former Captain Morasco speaks, if you'd like to add anything to what Robin said, that will be appropriate.

ROTHBLATT: Remember, the President of the United States intervened in the Green Beret case when my military counsel and I made motions, directed to the President to dismiss the charges. It was on our motion that this case never went to trial. The facts were never heard by the public, just as the Calley case was heard with all its grim details. A big cloud stands around these great officers, these great Special Services officers who are accused.

This was an opportunity. It was an opportunity for Robert and I to tell the theme, and it was great for Bob Morasco to come out and say, after Calley got the short end of the vindictiveness of certain people, and saying we don't play wars that way -- Bob had the courage to come out and say this is a dirty deal to give Mr. Calley.

And I've just been looking at some of the syndicated columns in the New York Post and the editorials in the New York Post today, and I am shocked. The anti-war groups -- in fact I appeared at Notre Dame University the other night and I was on the same platform, believe it or not, with Bill Kunstler. We're totally in accord. Bill said, "The conviction of Lieutenant Calley is a shock. He shouldn't be kept in jail." My god, you wouldn't think Kunstler thinks that way. But read some of these stories. Editorial in the New York Post. "The immediate consequences of two sadly injudicious interventions, a sparing of Calley from the stockade, swiftly followed by the announcement that he will personally review and resolve the lieutenant's case, is to render academic the appeal process." This a criticism of President Nixon for interfering in the Calley case. Shocking. Because the public is forced by public opinion, as the President was forced by public opinion in the Green Beret case, to dismiss the charges, now the President is being forced by public opinion to correct this injustice, the New York Post editorial writers are shocked. The American people are not shocked. They are shocked by the injustice

of the conviction.

FARBER: I don't know how shocked Captain Morasco was when he read how much -- you know, the first time we talked about your book, I said, "A lot of true words are spoken through false teeth." I didn't realize quite how many true words there were in the not-so-false teeth of your novel, "Court Martial," but Captain Morasco knows everything about it, and in a minute I want his counter-comment.

* * *

I'm Barry Farber. I am in the genial company right now of a murderer or of a man who performed a legal order in time of war. I'm sure different Americans will have different points of views, but Robert F. Morascao does not behave like a murderer. Murderers don't call the New York Times and say, "Look, these are the facts. I've thought about it for 18 months and I want the world to know."

Incidentally, Mr. Morasco, how did you get -- how did this get in the papers? Stories on page-one of the New York Times just don't happen spontaneously.

MORASCO: Well, I'm not not adept at public relations or really even know how to contact ...

FARBER: Well, you made page-one.

MORASCO: Well, I thought that -- I wanted to make this statement, and I felt that the New York Times was the one that could get my story around the best, and I just contacted them.

FARBER: You haven't sought any money for your story, have you? You haven't tried to make deals with magazines for the exclusive, or anything.

MORASCO: No, the New York Times doesn't pay five cents.

FARBER: I am aware of that.

MORASCO: I'm sure that I could have called a magazine, the main magazines that would be excited about this kind of story, and pay me well. Money is not my reason for making this story known. The reason is principle and belief in my country, what it stands for and what it was built on. And it just seems to me that, following through on what Henry said a moment ago, when he was reading from the New York Post, that there are some people who object to the President's intervention in the Calley case. Maybe my government and history teachers in my schooling were naive or were incorrect, but it was always my belief that the

President of the United States represented and was the voice of the people of the United States. I have also heard that the letters that were received were 100 to 1 in favor of -- Gallup polls have been taken. Eighty, ninety per cent of the people in the United States are for the President intervening. Now, if there is one man who happens to write for the New York Post who seems to feel differently, well, I think there is something wrong. The President represents those eighty per cent, not the man in the New York Post.

FARBER: Robin Moore and Henry Rothblatt, co-authors of "Court Martial," not just two free-lance writers who said, "Let's write a book and call it 'Court Martial.'" Robin Moore, the closest thing to a Green Beret who was never actually a member. He joined the Green Berets, wrote "The Green Berets," and has been known as the unofficial voice of the Green Berets to the council of nations and to screens and books, magazine articles, to everybody in the world.

Henry Rothblatt is the attorney who responded to the case erupting into publicity about the annihilation, destruction, the eliminating with extreme prejudice of the triple, double, or quadruple agent. Their book is "Court Martial." And I have to say this. My stomach has not felt the same since reading the opening chapter of "Court Martial." I am not -- this is not -- I do not authorize any publisher to excerpt that, because when you read that opening chapter you will realize what I just said is not funny. But it puts the situation in this context. Right away you get a different kind of impression of this double, triple, quadruple agent, than one that might come through in the press, where he is just a victim of the CIA, Green Berets and Army. Apparently he did some things which I think Henry, in legalistic language, might call mitigating circumstances.

ROTHBLATT: Right.

FARBER: Anyhow, Bob Morasco, are you glad that Robin Moore and Henry Rothblatt wrote "Court Martial"? You say that there was so much classified stuff in there that you were alarmed.

MORASCO: I can't say that what is written in that book is incorrect or not the truth. I just can't say that. But I do tend to object to that book being written because the classified information that was in there I couldn't release to the public to help to defend myself at the time of the case, yet 18 months later I can read the story.

FARBER: All right, you were not a Calley-type situation. You were one of, how many, seven, men accused of executing one double or triple agent, and the case never came to trial. How did your life change, except for that automobile accident, when you got back? Were you regarded as a killer, a criminal, a

trigger-man, a hero? How, by people who got that low profile of publicity and not all the enormous glare that Calley is living in?

MORASCO: It was mixed. The feeling was mixed. I would say that, generally speaking, I was looked at favorably, but I was looked at favorably by people who didn't know the truth of the case. Now that they know it, if they still look at me favorably, as an American who was doing his duty, now I feel the right to accept that praise. And the reverse is true for those who might have criticized me. Some people seem to feel that I was a controversial character.

FARBER: Did you relish this assignment of eliminating this agent -- I mean knowing what this agent had done, knowing and -- because this is family radio I cannot go into detail as to what that double agent was responsible for, how much suffering, et cetera -- death, murder and torture inflicted on Americans and others. You knew all that. Did you say, "Hot dog, I'm glad that's the CIA's order," or did you say, "Good Lord, me, Bob Morasco, I've got to take this poor man with a wife out in a boat," or where did your attitude follow between those poles?

MORASCO: I most certainly didn't relish the thought of killing a human being. We tried very much, but yet in vain, to try to take care of this situation in another way, besides elimination. The killing of a human being, I just can't imagine anyone relishing. I certainly didn't. It was a war. It was something that I felt had to be done because they were my orders and I felt that people superior to me had considered all possibilities, and that was the best possibility; therefore it was my duty to follow through.

FARBER: You mentioned the direction of the country. In a minute I want you all three to collaborate on your separate estimations as to the direction of the country.

* * *

Bob Morasco comes not to plug a book called "Court Martial," but to separate himself from it and point out that Robin Moore was not in the Green Berets. He has the right to sit down and write any work of fiction he chooses. He so chose, with Henry Rothblatt, to write a work of fiction called "Court Martial," of which Bob Morasco says so much of it is the revelation of classified material that he felt impelled to come to page-one of the New York Times with his story. Incidentally, I think you're to be commended for not calling one of the major magazines, getting yourself \$50,000 and playing your role in this that way. I think you have --- no matter how you will be judged by the public, I think you will now be judged on a pedestal shorn of tinsel trappings and distractions. This is right where to do it, page-one of the New York Times.

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MORASCO: I would like to pop in here for just a moment, because you just brought something to my mind. About 18 months ago there was a man who went to one of our magazines to sell photographs, photographs of My Lai. He got a great, great deal of money for those photographs. That man's materialism, his thirst for money, has put Lieutenant Calley in a position where he may have to spend the rest of his life in jail. He has also put the United States in a very difficult position.

FARBER: Well, I am sure that man, if he were here, would say, "I have reached the world with pictures, with documented evidence of the atrocity." Instead of embarrassing the Army or subjecting Lieutenant Calley to what he is going through, I am sure his moral emphasis would be where mine is, you know, why have atrocities like this in the first place.

MORASCO: Then why didn't he ... to the front page of the New York Times? Why did he sell ...

MAN: Precisely.

MORASCO: ... them for dollars?

FARBER: Precisely. Precisely. That's how we got into this. I was commending you for taking that latter route.

ROTHBLATT: Barry, let me suggest this. That man took those pictures in the course of his official duties as a photographer, as part of that company operating in My Lai. Those pictures should have been turned over to the intelligence officers and to the information officers of that brigade. His failure to turn over those pictures has embarrassed our country and our government, because, had those pictures been promptly turned over to the information officers and to the intelligence officers, this matter would have been referred in the regular course -- exposed in the regular course of military channels, and there would have been no My Lai case nor My Lai incident. It would have been dealt with in an official way and it wouldn't have had this terrible surreptitious effect of somebody covering up. The Army couldn't be in a position to cover up. There would have been no concealing by anybody because too many people would have known. Instead, if anybody should be indicted for causing this country difficulty, it should be that man who, while doing presumably his job for his country, took money and embarrassed our country at the same time.

FARBER: Bob Morasco, when you said you feared for the direction of this country, what, specifically, did you mean?

MORASCO: When I see that we can go into a war, a defensive war, not an offensive war as we remember in World War II or in Korea -- and in Korea occasionally we were in defensive situations,

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but to send troops into a war and leave them there for ten years, ten years on a defensive, holding action, a war of attrition, where you just hope that you will kill more of them than they will kill of you and then they will quit, I don't like that direction.

YYou send these men over there to a very difficult situation, and then you bring them home and 18 months later send them to jail.

FARBER: This is not the end, only the clock forces me into temporary submission. This is not even the beginning of the beginning. This is step-one in the painful and vital investigation for all Americans.

My partners for the expedition, former Captain Robert F. Morasco, now Mr. Morasco, one of the Green Berets in the famous Green Beret case, accused of eliminating a double, triple, quadruple agent. Henry Rothblatt went over to Vietnam to mount the defense. Robin Moore, who wrote "The Green Berets," joined Henry in writing a book, called "Court Martial." Now comes Robert F. Morasco and says the story is true, "I am the man who eliminated the agent in question under CIA orders." Bob Morasco doesn't want to be called a trigger-man. I'm going to call him a trigger-man pulling the trigger on a new burst of conscience which will certainly possess the United States for many years to come.

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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MORASCO CONFESSES TO MURDER OF TRIPLE AGENT: IMPLICATES CIA

FRANK McGEE: No sooner was Lieutenant Calley convicted of murder than several former servicemen announced that they too had killed civilians and were as guilty as Calley.

Robert Morasco, a former captain in the Special Forces or Green Berets, was one of eight men charged with killing a South Vietnamese civilian in 1969. But the Army later dropped the charges. The victim in the Green Beret was a civilian, but not a bystander. He was a double, perhaps a triple, agent. But Morasco in his anger at the Calley verdict now admits what he never has confessed before.

SANDER VANOCUR: Did you kill the agent?

ROBERT MORASCO: Yes, I did. And I did so because of orders that were given to me, orders that I felt were legal orders.

VANOCUR: Who gave the order? I don't mean was it from Washington. Who gave the order to you?

MORASCO: It came from a man who was a CIA operative who was supposedly commissioned as a lieutenant colonel. He was a colonel in Saigon, but he was a CIA operative. And it

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was his statement. And this is as close to a quote as I can remember. "Although we cannot officially sanction it, elimination is your best course of action." When you receive that kind of an oblique order, that means do it and get it over with and don't bother us with it.

This was also, we felt, cleared through military channels.

VANOCUR: Why do you think that there was an attempt to prosecute all of you when you thought it was in the best interests; you were doing what had been ordered?

MORASCO: There're two camps within the military, one which does not like Special Forces or any of the elite, so-called elite, units. That was a part of it. Secondly, the military does not like the fact that the CIA sometimes gets involved in military operations. The Army doesn't like that at all. Many of the military people. And they don't feel that it's necessary.

This was an opportunity to sever any connection between civilian agencies and the military. We were very often the action arm of the civilian agency.

VANOCUR: What has made you now, since you wouldn't answer the question a year ago, come forward now and say, yes, you did kill that South Vietnamese agent?

MORASCO: If the United States feels that they must be so righteous that they must admit to the atrocities of war and punish their own men for these atrocities, then I think

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they're highly mistaken. And I think that if they want to do that, then we just shouldn't have any more wars. If we are going to send men into the kind of war that we have in Vietnam, a guerrilla war and our part being a counterguerrilla operation -- if we're going to do that, we have to expect that certain things are going to happen that are distasteful to the people back here in the United States.

Ex-Beret Says He Killed Agent on Orders of C.I.A.

By JOHN DARNTON

Robert F. Marasco, one of the eight Green Berets who were charged but never tried in the slaying two years ago of a South Vietnamese suspected to have been a double agent, says that he shot and killed the man on "oblique yet very, very clear orders" from the Central Intelligence Agency.

"He was my agent and it was my responsibility to eliminate him with extreme prejudice," Mr. Marasco said in an interview Friday. "Eliminate with extreme prejudice" is the Special Forces' euphemism for a killing.

The "elimination" was approved "up and down our chain of command," the former Army captain added. Although he corroborated details of the slaying, he refused to divulge the names of other persons involved.

Mr. Marasco, now 29 years old and a life insurance salesman in Bloomfield, N.J., said that he was admitting his complicity out of a sense of anger over the conviction of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. on charges of premeditated murder in the deaths of 22 civilians at My Lai.

His statements coincide with the publication of a novel called "Court Martial," written jointly by Robin Moore, the author of "The Green Berets," and Henry Rothblatt, the attorney who represented several of the Green Berets arrested in the alleged killing.

The novel is said to be a close rendering of the events that led to the arrest of the Berets, including Col. Robert B. Rheault, then commander of the Army's 3,000 Special Forces personnel in Vietnam. The elite corps, which specializes in counterinsurgency, is still in existence, but is now

deployed elsewhere, according to the Pentagon.

Six of the eight Berets (charges against two were held in abeyance) were to have stood trial on charges of murder and conspiracy in October, 1969. But the Army abruptly dropped the case on Sept. 29, in a decision reviewed by the Nixon Administration, on the ground that it could not enlist the cooperation of the C.I.A., which had refused to provide witnesses.

The Vietnamese agent was Thai Khac Chuyen, whose body was dropped into the South China Sea off Nhatrang, the Special Forces headquarters 180 miles north of Saigon. Despite intensive dredging, it was apparently never recovered.

Mr. Marasco corroborated the following details, all of which have previously been reported in the press with unnamed sources cited.

Mr. Chuyen's role as a double agent was discovered when a raid on a Vietcong camp turned up a photograph of him with a high-ranking North Vietnamese official. He was told he would be sent on an important mission and instead was held in solitary confinement, where he compromised himself through lie detector tests and sodium pentathol (truth serum).

He was first drugged with morphine and then killed by Mr. Marasco in a motorboat with two shots to the head from a .22-caliber pistol equipped with a silencer (which jammed between shots). His body was tossed overboard in a mail sack weighted with chains and tire rims by the three officers in the boat. This was on June 20, 1969.

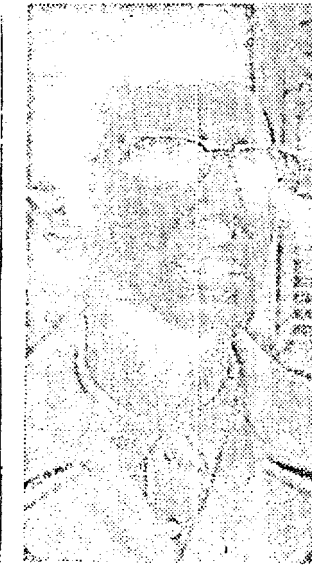
A cover story was fabricated in which a Japanese-American fitting Mr. Chuyen's description was sent on an air-supported "secret mission" near the Cambodian border.

The question of what to do with Mr. Chuyen led to meetings between Green Beret officers and C.I.A. officials. The C.I.A. in Saigon finally sent a message reading "return agent

to duty" and warning of "flap potential." The message, however, arrived after his death.

Mr. Marasco said Mr. Chuyen was a "principal agent," whose function was to hire, train, pay and coordinate sub-agents on intelligence missions. He refused to give the ultimate aim of the missions and referred the question to a "fact sheet" drawn up by Mr. Moore to publicize his new novel. The "fact sheet" is based on a transcript of the "pre-trial" hearings of the case.

The "fact-sheet" stated that Mr. Chuyen had been involved



The New York Times
Robert F. Marasco

in a secret Special Forces unit known as B-57, whose goal was to pick military targets in Cambodia for a projected incursion by United States and South Vietnamese forces and to train 3,000 Cambodian troops to guard the country from Communism should Prince Norodom Sihanouk be deposed.

In reality, Mr. Marasco stated, Mr. Chuyen was a triple-agent, whose real allegiance was to an organization led by Gen. Duong Van Minh. The success of this group, which was striving for a coalition government, would have led to "Communist control" and "massive extermination," Mr. Marasco asserted.

When the charges against the Berets were dropped, the Secretary of the Army, Stanley R. Resor, said that the C.I.A. was "not directly involved in the alleged incident."

But Mr. Marasco maintains that a vaguely-worded execution order was passed on to his

superior officers in Saigon by a "C.I.A. operative whose cover was a lieutenant-colonel, United States Army." He quoted the wording as: "We cannot officially sanction it, but elimination is your best course of action."

"The C.I.A. does not give written orders," Mr. Marasco said. "When someone in the C.I.A. says to you . . . 'your best course of action is elimination' that means 'we approve it.'"

Mr. Marasco claimed there had been "hundreds" — "and I'm being conservative" — of summary executions in South Vietnam. Most, he said, were carried out by the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit, which he described as an assassination squad of Vietnamese natives "trained, financed and equipped by the C. I. A." But others were carried out by American "advisers," he said.

Mr. Marasco resigned from the Army on Oct. 14, 1969, and shortly thereafter was injured in a car collision in New Jersey that kept him on a hospital critical list for 10 days.

Because he is no longer in the Army, he is not subject to court-martial. Previously, he has made guarded statements on the killing, but has never before admitted it. He said he is receiving no money from the novel "Court Martial."

Did he regret his actions? "No," he said. "I felt that it was my duty. Anything I did in military duty in Vietnam was with the biggest patriotic motives. I never wake up in the middle of the night screaming."

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Former Green Beret Captain Tells of Killing Triple Agent

BLOOMFIELD, N.J. (AP) — Robert F. Marasco, a former captain in the U.S. Special Forces in Vietnam, said last night he shot and killed a South Vietnamese triple agent two years ago — a slaying he and others were accused of but were never brought to trial for.

The execution was carried out at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency and with the knowledge of "our chain of command," Marasco said.

He said he shot the man twice in the head and, with two other officers, put him into a weighted sack and dumped him from a boat into the South China Sea on June 20, 1969.

Angered by Calley Case

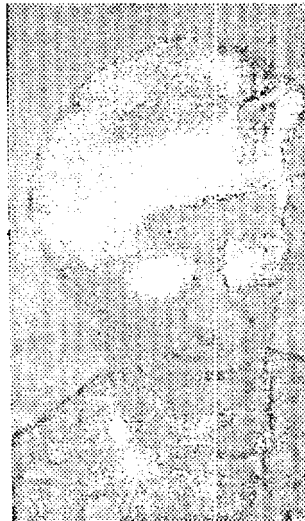
Marasco said he came forward now, at the risk of prosecution for murder, because of his anger over the court-martial of Lt. William L. Calley Jr.

He said he killed the agent because "of orders that were given to me — orders that I felt were legal orders."

Marasco and seven other, including the Green Beret's commander in Vietnam, Col. Robert B. Rheault, were accused by the Army of the slaying. The Army later dropped the charges, saying it did so because it was told the CIA would not permit any of its men to testify at a trial.

Marasco, now 29 and in the insurance business, left the service in October 1969.

While out of reach now of military prosecution, Marasco said, "I'm open to having the charges brought against me



CAPT. ROBERT F. MARASCO

again by civilian authority. That potential was always there. There is no statute of limitation.

"Over the last year and a half I've wanted to release this information."

He got conflicting advice from lawyers, he said, but decided to speak because of "the Calley thing."

"Not Calley himself," said Marasco, "but 'the Calley thing' — all the others who could follow him. This Calley thing should be the last one."

Neither Calley, he said, nor any other soldiers, should be made to stand trial for acts performed under orders and the necessities of duty.

The agent he killed, Thai Khac Chuyen, was discovered to be a double agent when a captured Viet Cong site yielded a photograph of Chuyen with a North Vietnamese general, Marasco said.

Later, it was determined that his true allegiance was to what Marasco identified as "the Third Force," a mostly South Vietnamese organization striving to set up a Communist-desired coalition government in Saigon, he said.

"He was my agent and it was my responsibility to eliminate him with extreme prejudice," which meant to kill Chuyen, Marasco said.

He said the execution order, never explicit, came from a CIA

operative who said: "We cannot officially sanction it, but elimination is your best course of action."

Marasco continued: "When someone in the CIA says to you, 'Your best course of action is elimination,' that means, 'we approve it.'"

The former captain said he estimated conservatively that hundreds of summary executions were carried out in South Vietnam, most of them by a Vietnamese assassination squad called the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit that was trained and financed by the CIA.

Marasco said Chuyen was first drugged with morphine and then put aboard a motorboat the night that he shot him twice in the head with a .22-caliber gun equipped with silencer. A mail tire rims was his final shroud and he was pushed over into the sea by Marasco and two other officers, Marasco said.

Executing Chuyen, he said, was a job that had to be done. He said he was extremely resentful that he ever was charged with the slaying.

"Maybe our people have learned this Calley thing should be the last one," he said, "and that's why I'm telling this now."

"My decision was based on my principles, my love for my country, for what it stands for and for what it was built for."